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August 24, 2010

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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS HONORS SUCCESSFUL FREEDOM SCHOOL LITERACY PROGRAM IN THE SECOND DISTRICT

LOS ANGELES -- Praising the program for its unique approach to energizing and inspiring youth through reading and interacting with one another, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today led the Board in recognizing five local “Freedom Schools” for their completion of successful literacy programs this summer in the Second District.

Over 200 Second District student “Scholars” participated at the Freedom School sites, including the Urban Lights Initiative, Inc. in Lynwood, Agape Spiritual Center in Culver City, First New Christian Fellowship in South L.A., Grace United Methodist Church in West LA, and The Empowered Life Development Center at Ward A.M.E. Church in South L.A.

The Freedom School’s unique structure, which included absorbing many multicultural life lessons, was created by famed national educator and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, Marian Wright Edelman.

The Board presentation also marked the observance of the national Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools’ “Civic Engagement Week.” Young Scholars from the Urban Lights Institute Freedom School provided an example of what they learned over the summer.

The Supervisor visited each site to support the programs and to personally participate as a guest reader for the Scholars. Each visit always ended with a hand clapping, foot-stomping celebration.

The CDF Freedom Schools are modeled after the intergenerational servant leadership approach used during the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964. The programs employ college students as “Servant Student Interns” to facilitate the high energy six-week summer program using the Integrated Reading Curriculum.

“People who believe inner city children are not capable of reading and comprehending material at or above their grade level need to see the success of the Freedom School program right here in our community,” the Supervisor said.

CDF Freedom Schools programs also address the poverty and poor health conditions that so many American children face, welcoming all children, regardless of their ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or geographic origin.

Since 1992, Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools programs have provided summer and after-school support for children and families through a model curriculum with five critical components, which include high-quality literacy enrichment; parent and family involvement; intergenerational leadership development; nutrition, health and mental health; and civic engagement and social action.

Through partnerships with community-based organizations, faith institutions, schools, colleges and universities, the CDF Freedom Schools programs are dedicated to helping children to develop a love of reading while increasing their self-esteem and confidence, and generating positive attitudes toward learning.

“I am pleased to commend the executive directors of the five Second District Freedom Schools for their leadership and dedication,” the Supervisor said. “Please continue to inspire and encourage these young people to make a difference in their circles of influence, wherever they may lie.”

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